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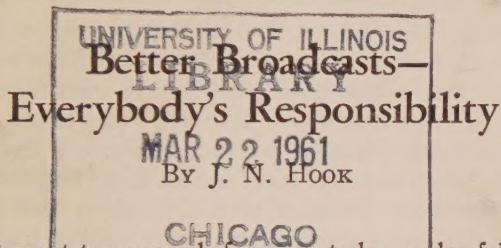
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I do not want to appear before you today under false colors. I lay no claim to being an expert on television. I probably see fewer television programs in a year than does anyone else in this room. I am an English teacher, a teacher of English teachers, and the executive officer of a national organization of 52,000 members and subscribers, many of whom unquestionably know much more about TV than I.

But as an English teacher I am interested in literary quality, in artistic and truthful portrayals of human beings, in thoughtful interpretations of human experience. I am no less critical of the pulp story, of the trashy novel, of the Sunday supplement than I am of the shoddy radio or television program. I believe that the possibilities of TV as a contributor to the maturity of the human race have hardly been touched. For that reason, non-expert though I am, I welcomed the opportunity to speak to this group.

As a device to put before you several conflicting points of view, I shall present my talk as a panel discussion. The four participants

As a sample of the stimulating kinds of persuasion used by J. N. Hook, Professor of English at the University of Illinois, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English, and Vice-President of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, this address is presented here. It was given at the annual convention of the American Council for Better Broadcasts, Columbus, Ohio, May 6, 1959. As you read "Better Broadcasts—Everybody's Responsibility," you will note many helpful suggestions on how students may be taught to be discriminating TV viewers. You may want to make use of these aids in your classes.

are Mr. Quintus Gadfly, the Immoderator of the program; Mr. T. V. Mogul, a representative of the television industry; Mrs. John Q. Hopeful, a literate parent; and Miss Constance Quickly, a teacher.

MR. GADFLY: Mr. Mogul, many people these days are saying nasty things about you. They claim that you are interested only in the crass, the material, the profitable—that you will sell your soul to sell your product. We'll probably say more nasty things about you today. Have you any statement you would like to make before we attempt to reform you?

MR. MOGUL: Yes, indeed. I think that people are a bit unfair to me. After all, I am performing an important function in American life. Now that people have more leisure than they had a few decades ago, someone has to give them some way to pass their time. I do that. I provide hours of entertainment every day and night. I make people laugh and cry, and I am an important factor in their continuing education. Because of me, children and adults both know a great deal more about almost every subject than they used to. Because of me, little children aren't in the way so much, and older children are kept in off the streets, and adults can stay home and enjoy family life instead of gallivanting around town looking for amusement. And if you say that the quality of my programs isn't high enough, the answer is that I give people what they want. I've tried frequently to give them highbrow things, but they refuse to look at them. So I give them what they'll look at.

MR. GADFLY: What do you think your responsibility is as a broadcaster?

MR. MOGUL: Mainly to give people what they want and to sell enough products to pay for still more of the same. Then, in those odd hours when I don't have a sponsored program, I give them some education, too—films about jet planes and how cheese is made and other educational stuff like that. And then there are quiz programs—very *educational*—and five-minute news and weather and sports broadcasts. It's a big responsibility.

MR. GADFLY: I'm going to make a speech to you, Mr. Mogul. It won't do any good, but I'll make it anyhow. I am optimistic enough to believe that mankind *may* be on the threshold of an age when at last we may begin to understand the human potential. We've just about reached a stage scientifically where nobody needs to go hungry any more; there's plenty to eat, and we're learning how to get it effectively from land and sea. We may even conquer war, unless some madmen blow us up. In other words, man's greatest age-old perils may be vanishing, and man can look forward to

what could be a better life than he has ever known. We face the possibility of an age that will permit human beings to explore the question of what human beings can be and become. The sky isn't the limit.

MRS. HOPEFUL: I'm glad to hear you say that. I worry so much sometimes. But how can human beings grow toward their potential?

MR. GADFLY: They need knowledge and understanding and dreams. Let me draw a rural analogy. In southern Illinois, where I grew up, the soil is poor, a clay sadly deficient in the chemicals that plants need to reach their potential. When I was a boy, a farmer there had to be content with corn yields of 15 or 20 bushels to an acre. But then the professors of agriculture, the county agents, the editors of farm magazines, the broadcasters on educational and sometimes even commercial radio stations began to help. They helped the farmer to learn to feed his soil, to give it the phosphorus and nitrogen and potassium it needed to yield its best. Now that land produces 50, 60, 70, 80, or more bushels of corn an acre instead of 20.

Now, Mr. Mogul and ladies, people are like plants. But they grow not on phosphorus and the like, but on knowledge, understanding, and dreams. When these are presented in meager amounts, people are stunted emotionally and intellectually. The more knowledge and understanding we have, the taller we can grow, and the more we can contribute toward reaching the human potential.

MISS QUICKLY: The schools try to increase knowledge and understanding, and sometimes even help to create dreams.

MRS. HOPEFUL: But the schools can't do it all. The children are in school less than one-eighth of the time. The average person spends a total of only about ten thousand hours in school in his whole lifetime; that's only about two per cent of the total. So the home has a bigger share, and everything that people do in their homes influences them. Everything helps to supply knowledge, understanding, and dreams: the songs a mother sings to her infant, the children next door, the grass in the park, the smell of clover, voices in a schoolroom, parents who take their child fishing or those who let him play and fight on the streets, the comic books and the newspaper headlines, the ideals or lack of ideals of a nation and of an age. All these, and many more, feed young people and adults—all these, plus a box about 18 by 24 by 18 inches.

MR. MOGUL: I knew you'd get back to me sooner or later.

MR. GADFLY: Before that box the children sit, and the young adults sit, and the adults sit. You know better than I how many

hours a day on the average. Is it an eighth of the waking time, or a fourth, or more? Is it an eighth or a fourth of mankind's knowledge and understanding and dreams that emanate from that box? Is it twenty million people or forty million who laugh in stultifying simultaneity at the same joke? Is it fifty million or a hundred million man and woman and child hours devoted each day to watching one band of horsemen pursuing another band? Is there, sitting anywhere, an author who realizes that the words of his typewriter are the food of a nation, that his inanities are their inanities, that his malnutrition is theirs, and that his wisdom—if he has it—can become their wisdom? Are there ten such authors? Is there, sitting anywhere, a manufacturer of headache pills, or soap, or automobiles, who realizes that he is helping to mold the future when he agrees to sponsor a new program, and that he can either starve or feed the people who will share in that future—that, like the soil, they will be 20-bushel producers or 80-bushel according to the way they are fed? Are there ten such manufacturers? Is there anyone, Mr. Mogul, responsible for what comes out of that box who realizes clearly what his responsibility really is, and who cares for more than an increase in sales?

MR. MOGUL: Of course we care, but if people won't look at anything highbrow, there's no sense showing it.

MRS. HOPEFUL: I don't believe that anybody is asking you to put on highbrow programs—at least not many of them. We realize that not everybody can appreciate opera and symphonies and *Oedipus Rex*—although *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* did do rather well, didn't they?

MR. MOGUL: There aren't enough good writers around, anyhow. We can't rely on Sophocles and Shakespeare for everything. And they can't write any more for us now—they're both dead.

MR. GADFLY: Do you mean to say, sir, that all a modern writer can do is repeat the same plot over and over? Must every western become a chase, every crime story become a series of violent acts, every teen-age story become a comedy in which the youngster escapes the consequences of a silly act? Must every character be only a cardboard figure with no depth, no real individuality? Is no living author capable of writing anything thoughtful and still interesting, informative and still exciting? Must what could be the greatest of all art forms be the dullest, the most repetitious, the most stupefying, the biggest purveyor of pabulum and mental poverty, a mere titillator of the nervous system?

MR. MOGUL: I see why you are called the Immoderator, Mr. Gadfly. You are grossly exaggerating. There are some good pro-

grams—Playhouse 90, for instance. And the Voice of Firestone was on the air for thirty years.

MR. GADFLY: But is now being taken off. And Playhouse 90 is only fifty per cent sponsored, I believe.

MR. MOGUL: We give the people what they want.

MISS QUICKLY: Mr. Gadfly, I haven't said very much so far, but I think that Mr. Mogul is speaking more truthfully than you realize. I believe that the people are being fed what most of them are satisfied with. I agree that it is largely trash, that it's even worse than that—it's an opiate, deadening and degenerating and harmful, often nefarious and vicious. But I don't think the cure lies in attacking marijuana because it's marijuana. I think it lies deeper than that—that we need to take constructive steps to educate the people, especially the young people, to ask for food instead of marijuana. If they ask for it, Mr. Mogul will give it to them. But it will take a long time.

MR. GADFLY: Oh, everybody knows that education is supposed to cure all ills. But, assuming you're right, what can you do? You have the children with you in school only about a thousand hours each year.

MISS QUICKLY: We need help. From you, Mrs. Hopeful. From you, Mr. Mogul. From you, Mr. Gadfly, to keep the rest of us honest. We need help from large national groups such as the national members of the American Council for Better Broadcasts—the AAUW, the American Legion Auxiliary (and why not the American Legion?), the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Farmers Union, the United Church Women, and the other national members and the state and local group members and the individual members. And what about the non-members? We need help from the PTA, and the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts, and every group that has the well-being of young people and of the nation in their hearts.

MRS. HOPEFUL: I agree, Miss Quickly, but what can we *do*? I belong to two or three of the groups you mentioned, but I don't know what they can do. I don't know what I as a parent can do.

MISS QUICKLY: May I tell you what some of my fellow teachers and I are doing—what we are trying to crowd into our already crowded school day? Some of these things can be done just as well in the home. I'll start with a simple little thing I do in my own teaching. For two or three weeks I have each student keep a "viewing log," in which he records the amount of time he watches television each day and lists the programs he sees. My children are

often impressed when some of them find they are spending as much as a fourth of their waking hours in viewing. Then we talk about getting our money's worth when we buy something in the stores, and then switch over to "getting our time's worth." How can we decide that we are getting our time's worth in front of that glass-eyed box?

That leads us naturally to a discussion of which programs are worth seeing, and why. We gradually build up a list of criteria for judging programs, so that we can decide which ones give us our time's worth. We don't try to force anything on anybody. But you'd be surprised at the sensible criteria that children—even rather young children—can think of.

We sometimes use our letter-writing exercises for the very practical purpose of writing to stations and networks, commending their good programs and telling why we think they're good, and criticizing the poor ones and telling why we think they're bad. Letter writing is a lot more interesting when the letters are actually going to be mailed.

MRS. HOPEFUL: Many of us families can profitably keep viewing logs, too—for the whole family. And decide how to judge programs. And write letters to broadcasters.

MR. MOGUL: We like to get letters. They help to show us what the people want. Letters and the ratings.

MR. GADFLY: Those damnable ratings! All they show is whether the people prefer Tweedledee or Tweddledum.

MISS QUICKLY (ignoring him): Especially profitable with children of junior high age is a listing of criteria for mature programs. Junior high youngsters are eager to be mature. They may decide that a mature drama has believable characters and a believable plot, that it does not retell essentially the same story week after week, that the conclusion is carefully prepared for, and so on.

MR. GADFLY: That's dangerous, though. Junior goes home and tells his family that Papa's never-to-be-missed detective story is immature, and strained family relations result. Junior demonstrates that it is unlikely that the Lone Ranger can get shot at week after week and never get hit and that therefore the program is unrealistic and immature, and Papa whams Junior with a TV stool. And Mama isn't very happy either when Junior shows her how improbable and immature her soap operas are. Are you trying to break up the American home, Miss Quickly?

MISS QUICKLY: No, but I don't mind if a little education and maturity are carried home to parents. The national organizations could help here, too, by the way, through their publications. Some

good, readable articles on such subjects as "What Is a Mature TV Program?" or "Can Television Grow Up?" or "Rate Your Own TV Programs." And if we could get magazines like *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman's Day* and *Reader's Digest* to carry such articles frequently, we'd get results a lot faster.

MRS. HOPEFUL: What else do you and other teachers do, Miss Quickly?

MISS QUICKLY: Some classes like to keep up a section of the bulletin board, called "Worthwhile Programs." Student committees may be given the responsibility, to save the teacher's time. Obviously, class discussions of what worthwhile programs are, would precede such a project.

A while ago, Mr. Gadfly, you said something that suggests a good game that can be played either in school or at home. This involves summarizing plots in the fewest possible words. Again and again the plot summary will be just five words long. "Good guys beat bad guys." Another summary, which applies to most of the stories about teen-agers is "Teen-ager gets into trouble and out." The virtue of this game is that it shows up monotony of plot of so many programs. Plots of good plays may be similarly condensed, it is true, but they are seldom so repetitive.

MR. MOGUL: You know, we get a lot of our material from books—good books. We've dramatized hundreds or even thousands of good stories, in spite of what Mr. Gadfly believes. I should think that in school and in homes like Mrs. Hopeful's, there could be some comparison of the book and the dramatization. What important episodes or characters were left out? Why? What differences in characterization were there? What depth of meaning was observable in one form but not in the other? Was the ending the same in both versions? A deeper understanding of both the medium of print and the medium of television might result.

MISS QUICKLY: In high school, exercises in writing radio and TV plays help to sharpen critical acumen, too. As students try to avoid the weaknesses they have learned about, they become even more aware of those weaknesses and more appreciative of the professionals who manage to avoid them.

MR. GADFLY: You'd better send some of those kids' plays to Mr. Mogul. They're probably better than the stuff he broadcasts.

MISS QUICKLY: Mr. Gadfly and Mr. Mogul were talking earlier about the responsibilities of those who control the mass media. That subject is worth discussing in the senior high school and in the home. The influence of broadcasters may be good or bad. In the control of the unscrupulous, television can contribute to mental

and moral bankruptcy, but the potential for good is no less. A nation addicted to the mass media must learn to question ceaselessly the integrity of the purveyors. Young people can be very serious. They like to talk about the implications of the immense power the mass media have placed in the hands of a few hundred or a few thousand persons. So far those few have used TV mainly as an opiate; they have been deadening minds rather than guiding them to pernicious deeds. But, students may ask, is one crime any better than the other?

In such a thoughtful mood, young people may discuss profitably the fact that sponsors generally refuse shows on certain topics. Seldom, for instance, does one see a realistic play about race relations, the injustice of some of the tactics of big business, or the abuses by labor of its privileges. What are the reasons for such omissions? Are they defensible?

MRS. HOPEFUL: What about newscasters and commentators?

MISS QUICKLY: A Baltimore teacher helped her students draw up a scorecard for judging newscasters and commentators. Of course this was really a list of criteria, under another name. At home the students listened to and evaluated a number of such men. I think their ratings were pretty intelligent. Anyhow they put Ed Murrow at the top and Fulton Lewis at the bottom.

MR. GADFLY: Our time is almost up, but I find myself wondering about that scrap of paper called "The Television Code of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters." As you know, a lot of stations give lip-service to it, and it does have some influence in keeping announcers from saying "damn"; I think the code even says that sex isn't to be shown "in an attractive manner." But I don't think the code is imaginative enough, or positive enough. It's like the late unlamented Hays Office code of the movies, or the comic book publishers' code that says comic book artists are no longer to draw pictures of eyes being gouged out. It's essentially negative. I'd like to see it made positive, with some "Thou shalt." It ought to include some positive recommendations about plots, and characters, and the duty of the industry to supply more of the knowledge and understanding and dreams that I've been clamoring for.

MR. MOGUL: One part of the code does call on the TV broadcaster to invite institutions devoted to education and culture to advise and work with him for the enlightenment of the audience, and so to produce cultural programs as to attract the largest possible audience. But so far those institutions or groups have been mainly content with criticizing. They haven't been rushing in to

help, or they have offered to help without adequate knowledge of the medium. Why can't ACBB assist in putting in the positive parts of the Code you're asking for, Mr. Gadfly, and then help us to create programs that can live up to them? But it's no easy job. Of course, if Miss Quickly and Mrs. Hopeful bring up their children so that a lot of people will be yelling for good stuff and twisting the dial away from the bad, programs are bound to improve. We give the people what they want, but it takes a while to learn to like olives, or caviar, or even a good ham on rye.

MR. GADFLY: That's probably the best summary of this discussion—if we're going to get better broadcasts, everybody has to teach everybody else to demand good ham! Schools can employ various gimmicks, and parents likewise. The idea of stressing maturity and getting your time's worth especially appeals to me. As to the role of national organizations, I think you were saying that they need to keep the public aware of the great, possibly helpful, possibly dangerous influence of broadcasters; they need to get the public to applauding and demanding good programs. What the ACBB needs is an effective press agent who can get the right kind of stories into national periodicals.

Editor's Note: While the blatant TV commercials are spewing forth activated charcoal; and the battle of pills, to see which travels the fastest, farthest, the quietest with the least disturbance, dominates the scene; when you see little hammers pounding away in your brain, and you decide to live modern and know the joy of good living; when the finest, most superb, gigantic, super-colossal, revolutionary, supercharged, quilted programs come to you soft as a caress; after you have called someone long distance and you're feeling wonderful, and you have eaten your talking cereal and have considered the most important $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in smoking today with low tar and more taste, and you know that it's what's up front that counts—there may filter into your mind, as you consider the thinking man's filter, a desire for a better TV diet, one that would profit your students.

Here are some hints of good programs that the networks have promised. The dates and times are indefinite and are subject to change without notice, but we suggest this list for your consideration. You may want to keep these mentionables in the back of your mind as a partial guide to better viewing for your students.

TV Previews

The Crime of Jebel Deeks (Alec Guinness, Startime, NBC, Nov. 3)
The Man Who Was Don Quixote (DuPont, CBS, Nov. 9)
A Doll's House (Julie Harris, Hallmark Hall of Fame, NBC, Nov. 15)
The Killers (Hemingway Specials, CBS, Nov. 19)
New York Philharmonic (Leonard Bernstein, CBS, Nov. 22)
Miracle on 34th Street (Movie, NBC, Nov. 27)

Peter and the Wolf (Art Carney, ABC, Nov. 29)

Oliver Twist (DuPont, CBS, Dec. 4)

The Philadelphia Story (Movie, NBC, Dec. 7)

High Road (John Gunther, ABC, Dec. 12 and 19)

The Wizard of Oz (Judy Garland, CBS, Dec. 13)

One Red Rose for Christmas (Helen Hayes, U. S. Steel Hour, CBS, Dec. 16)

Amahl and the Night Visitors (Opera, NBC, Dec.)

Alice in Wonderland (Walt Disney, ABC, Dec.)

Mrs. Miniver (Movie, CBS, Jan. 7)

Arrowsmith (DuPont, CBS, Jan. 17)

Cavalleria Rusticana (Opera, NBC, Jan., or Feb.)

The Tempest (Maurice Evans, Hallmark, NBC, Feb. 3)

Fifth Column (Hemingway Specials, CBS, Feb.)

The Valley of Decision (Movie, CBS, March 20)

The Secret of Freedom by Archibald MacLeish (Tony Randall, Project 20, NBC, April 3)

The Cradle Song (Hallmark, NBC, April 10)

The Citadel (Movie, ABC, April 20)

Don Giovanni (Opera, NBC, April)

Watch also for the following: Our American Heritage Series, Sundays, NBC; Art Carney Dramas including *Our Town*, Fridays, NBC; Project 20 including *The Life of Mark Twain*, NBC; Young People's Concerts with Leonard Bernstein, Saturdays, CBS; The Last Word, Sundays, CBS.

What's the Use of Poetry?

By CHARLOTTE ANDERSON

Teacher of English, Champaign Senior High School

Recently I received an advertisement through the mail inviting me to subscribe to a new magazine which was to begin circulation in the fall. According to the advertisement, the purpose of this periodical would be "to provide something which should exist in America, but does not—a magazine which unites art and ideas, the sum of which is culture." The publicity went on to declare, in effect, that the love of the arts is becoming increasingly popular in America today; and lest I question whether this be a really desirable state of affairs, it reassured me with two quotations from rather divergent sources. The first came from President Eisenhower: "We will need not only Einsteins, but Washingtons and Emersons." The second was from an editorial in the *New York Times* for December 10, 1957: "Let us have more engineers, but let us not discourage our poets, our musicians, our artists; for they too will help us with our battles for civilization." Believing that they had now established the need, as well as the respectability of such a magazine, they recited some of the personal benefits sure to be my lot if I read this publication; for example, my conversation would be improved and my knowledge of creative works would increase.

Superficial as the above statements may sound, I find no reason to quarrel with them. Yes, I believe in the union of art and ideas; and I am quite happy, if it is true, that Americans are becoming more interested in this so-called "culture." I am also grateful that, in spite of rather recent deprecating connotations of the word "egg-head," a widened scholarship has the blessing of our President, as well as the approval of one of the editors of an important newspaper. I have always welcomed an opportunity to improve my conversation and increase my knowledge. I began to think that it might be a good idea to give a magazine with lofty aims some encouragement by becoming a subscriber. That is, I felt this way until I came to one of the last paragraphs in the advertisement. Here I read that the publishers of this magazine promise that it shall be "thoroughly impractical." At this point, I tucked away my checkbook and took a practical view of the whole matter, thereby saving myself several dollars.

This incident is more than an amusing description of the inconsistencies of argument used by modern advertisers in their hope of luring unwary customers into buying a certain commodity. It

seems to me that this company, whose admitted purpose is to increase the circulation of good reading, has betrayed the very people who might help build up the enthusiasm for such a venture—namely, the teachers of literature. Publishers do this when they label the vehicle by which they intend to accomplish their purpose “thoroughly impractical.”

Not that those of us whose joyous task it is to teach literature and share with our students ideas which we believe will enrich all of life and make it worthwhile are unused to being considered “ornamental” rather than “useful.” The recent blame for our technological incompetence as compared with those who could launch Sputniks was directed more pointedly at public education than at any other American institution. With the renewed emphasis on the importance of mathematics and science came a corresponding belittling of the already questioned values of such subjects as literature. Some teachers, either because they, too, had become convinced that what they were doing could not really be justified in the light of modern threats to security; or because they were simply worn out by constantly having to defend their positions, gave in to these pressures and were silent. However, there are many who have become alert to the obligation of defending their wares, not as if these were mere “plus” signs in life, but rather as if they represented “that one thing needful.”

These teachers are no longer apologetic and timid about the importance of the work they do. They agree with President Eisenhower that we certainly *do* need both Einsteins and Emersons, but they point out that a combination of the two men would be even more desirable. It is their wish to have a small part in the education of such a person. They insist that the battle for civilization about which the *Times* editor is talking is no sham encounter when he asks for the assistance of the artist. Teachers speak often to classes and community members of the importance of wide knowledge and understanding of the best in literature, and they point out that they are talking about something which has truly “practical” values.

This sounds fine as long as one confines himself to a general discussion of the values of literature. Whether a particular individual enjoys reading or not, he usually does not oppose it for others, provided there is time and inclination. But suppose one teaches poetry to a class of students, one or several of whom inevitably ask, “But what good is it? How will I ever make use of this?” To answer “beauty is its own excuse for being” is inadequate, especially to the student who currently may have a consuming interest in space travel or nuclear fission.

Is there any way in which this student can be made to see that, for his own life as well as in the building of worthwhile relationships with others, he can get genuine practical helps from his study of poetry? I believe there is. The teacher will need to draw heavily upon his own training and experience at this point; but one way in which he may capture the student's interest is to assure him that he is not the first, nor will he be the last, to raise such questions—that men quite famous, and well educated, will supply him with further arguments to uphold him in his opinions. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss the Elizabethan age and such men as Gosson who called poetry a “maker of lies,” “a time waster,” “a school of abuse” even as long ago as the 16th century, and to explain that it is likely that many before him had the same opinion. And one might add that a certain Mr. Peacock in the 19th century called poetry useless and a waste of time. His words are so modern that one may well quote passages bearing the same idea as the following:

It (poetry) can never make a philosopher, nor a statesman, nor in any class of life a useful or rational man. It cannot claim the slightest share in any one of the comforts and utilities of life of which we have witnessed so many and so rapid advances.

The teacher may emphasize that Mr. Peacock will admit that poetry is highly ornamental, and that he states: “Even if this be granted, it does not follow that a writer of poetry, in the present state of society, is not a waster of his own time, and a robber of others.” The student may find it hard to believe that anything resembling his own thoughts could have been written so many years ago. One can remind the student that Mr. Peacock lived before Sputnik; he could well be the mouthpiece of certain critics of education when he observes:

But in whatever degree poetry is cultivated, it must necessarily be to the neglect of some branch of useful study; and it is a lamentable spectacle to see minds, capable of better things, running to seed in the specious indolence of these empty, aimless mockeries of intellectual exertion.

Mr. Peacock believes that poetry is of no more value to civilization than a toy, and as such it cannot appeal to the really intelligent person of his time; but only to those of “weak and selfish mind,” “unmanly spirits,” and “empty heads”; and that man, in attaining “intellectual progression,” has advanced to the point where he can look down with disdain upon the poets who have little hope of survival in an age that has other and better concerns.

The teacher must be honest with the student, and show that Mr. Peacock was most likely writing in a half-humorous vein. The

student may admit that a similar characteristic applies to his own criticism. Be that as it may, the next obligation of the teacher is to present his own "Defence of Poetry." The student should know that critics such as Peacock were answered by great poets whose opinions remain respected, not only for their literary worth, but because their ideas defending the values of poetry still make good sense in our own age.

One of the reasons young people of today say that they see no use for poetry is that they know almost nothing about it, and thus a part of the "defence" must include some background in the history and universality of poetics. The average American student does have a certain feeling of indebtedness to those great men who built our nation; and it seems that this could be extended to include a respect for early poets, who, in so many instances, were an inspiration to these men. As Sidney wrote:

And first, truly to al them that professing learning inveigh against Poetry, may justly be objected, that they goe very neer to ungratfulnes, to seek to deface that, which in the noblest nations and languages that are knowne, hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first Nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges; and will they now play the Hedgehog, that being received into the den, drave out his host? or rather the Vipers, that with their birth kill their Parents?

This might be a logical time to introduce a reluctant student to some of the poetry which celebrates great events of history, not only American, but those of other nations. One can find scores of such poems with a ringing marching quality almost sure to delight youth. "Lepanto" by G. K. Chesterton and "The Oregon Trail" by Arthur Guiterman are two which students usually enjoy. One may tell stories of today's heroes who enjoy poetry and good reading; for example, Vice Admiral Holloway, in command of all U.S. fighting forces in the Middle East. Sidney, too, has a good deal to say about the use of poetry to inspire valor and courage, and calls it a "companion of the Campes," and from it says our active men "received their first notions of courage."

But poetry has a wider function than that of inspiring men to courageous action. The average person's greatest conflict will be with himself and with those immediately around him. The specialization in modern life emphasizes "separateness" and contemporary man is, by and large, a lonely creature. Any bridge which can unite the life of man with his fellow man is a way toward finding purpose and joy for him in daily living. A skillful teacher can use poetry as such a bridge. One may read from the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and from contemporaries of the stature of Sandburg and Frost. These unite

men by speaking in marvelous ways about feelings common to all of us, no matter how far apart we may be in our vocations and interests.

It is impossible within the narrow scope of this paper to include a description of all the ways open to the teacher who wishes to help the student see practical values of poetry for his own life. One other area may, however, be considered. If the teacher feels the student is over-emphasizing the importance of the subject matter of other courses which he is studying, or is taking his own importance too seriously, it may be well to help him laugh at himself or the foibles of others, by introducing some satiric or humorous verse; to remind him that, after all, we dwell in "clayey lodgings." He cannot help being amused by Sidney's picture of the "Astronomer who, looking to the starres, might fall into a ditch, of the inquiring Philosopher, who might be blinde in himselfe, and the Mathematician, who might draw foorth a straight line with a crooked hart."

Certainly, the student's knowledge of his religious heritage, and his own need to develop nobility of character can be enlarged by many poems dealing with these subjects.

One can hope that by varying processes the student will gradually come into a larger sympathy and appreciation for poetry as it affects his whole life and his relationships with others. The hauntingly beautiful words of Sidney's description of this process as a pleasant journey merit repeating:

For he (the Poet) dooth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will intice any man to enter into it. Nay, he dooth as if your journey should lye through a fayre Vineyard, the first give you a cluster of Grapes: that full of that taste, you may long to passe further. He beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margent with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness: but hee cometh to you with words sent in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for the well inchaunting skill of Musicke; and with a tale forsooth he commeth unto your: with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner.

So far, little has been said about the kind of world in which our student is growing. It may not be too difficult to convince him that poetry has use for him in his private life, or even that it can be a means of breaking down barriers between him and his neighbor. But there is a wider world in which he will soon be a citizen. This world, made small by scientific achievement, has not, by that fact, become in an adequate sense a friendly neighborhood. The adults around him talk constantly of wars and rumors of wars. Possibility of economic recession haunts many who at present enjoy great

material wealth. With his money, man has been able to buy many things, but few which he has learned to enjoy. He has libraries filled with books which he does not read, paintings which he does not really appreciate, and beautiful houses in which he is not at home. Our student reads in the newspaper about a world in which dishonesty and graft, racial and religious prejudice, and immorality seem to be accepted as a natural part of life. Youth summarizes his parents' disgust, despair, or indifference, by simply saying that things are "in a mess." And the student asks, "What can poetry have to do with such a state of affairs, and how can it help in effecting a remedy for man's problems?"

The answer is, of course, that it has a great deal to do with them; but establishing the communication necessary to help the student see this is often extremely difficult. However, it is possible and vitally necessary to attempt it. Some suggestions on how this could be brought about include a forthright admission by the teacher that he, too, is troubled by these threats to life as it ought to be lived; and that poets from the beginnings of recorded history have been disturbed by man's failure to live up to his potential; and that poets were probably among the first to cry "Shame!" because man makes poor choices for himself. There are countless poems with challenging themes.

Furthermore, the teacher should stress the fact that greatly increased knowledge in all fields of human endeavor is in itself no solution to the basic problems that beset mankind. Shelley speaks to this point in his "Defence of Poetry" in an unusually clear and effective manner:

We have more moral, political, and historical wisdom than we know how to reduce into practice; we have more scientific and economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies. The poetry in these systems of thought is concealed by the accumulation of facts and calculating processes. There is no want of knowledge respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government, and political economy, or at least, what is wiser and better than what men now practice and endure. But we let "*I dare not wait upon I would*, like the poor cat in the adage." We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; *we want the poetry of our life*: our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest. The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of men over the external world, has, for want to the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind?

Stephen Vincent Benet has much the same message in his story "By the Waters of Babylon." In it he has John, a member of a primitive tribe living in a world a great part of which had been destroyed by atomic warfare, comment upon our generation with the words, "Perhaps, in the old days, they ate knowledge too fast."

Finally, the teacher should explain to the student that much of what is being written today is merely a reflection of the pessimism of our times and is of questionable value in helping man face the uncertainties of life; that probably the best that can be said for such writing is that it represents a warning of man's fate if he does not change his ways. The student must remember that time decides which poetry shall live. He may need to look for encouragement in living the good life to those whose poetry has survived the period in which they lived. Poets with vision Shelley calls the "legislators of the world" who "can redeem from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." It is their poetry, he believes, that is the "most unfailing herald, companion and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution."

My defense of poetry is only a beginning of a definitive answer to the criticism of "impractical" as it is leveled against the study of poetry in our public schools today. One might at a later time find it useful to outline in detail a course of study based upon these ideas. I believe it would be interesting to try out such a course in a classroom and thus have a basis for evaluating the ideas which have been presented.

Croce, in the closing remarks of his "Defence of Poetry," has this to say:

It may be said in discouragement of vain hopes and over-confidence that the world is hard and heavy, and needs more than individual good will and poetic fancies. But we know that, all the same, this hard and heavy world moves, or rather that it exists only in movement, and that it is moved by nothing but one united effort; that each of us, great or small or tiny as he may be, in his relation to all others is answerable for the world. If we, too, as lovers of poetry, exert what strength we have, we shall have done the duty of our station.

The "brave new world" which we need, and wish to help build, must not be inhabited by hollow men wandering through wastelands, but rather by those to whom Sidney refers as *Hercules proles*.

REFERENCES:

- Thomas Love Peacock, "The Four Ages of Poetry."
- Philip Sidney, "Apologie of Poetry."
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Defence of Poetry."
- Benedetto Croce, "Defence of Poetry."

Some of the Best Illinois High School Poetry and Prose

Teachers have widely acclaimed the poetry and prose issues of the *Bulletin*; many have used them in their classes. This year some of the best poetry written by Illinois students in grades 7 through 12 will be published in the March *Bulletin*, and some of the best prose in the April issue. This is your invitation to submit selected writing of your students.

Please observe the following rules carefully.

1. Please send *poetry* manuscripts to Professor Eugene M. Waffle, Department of English, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois. Send *prose* to Professor Ethel Seybold, Department of English, Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois. This year the choices will be made by members of the English departments of Eastern Illinois University and Illinois College.

2. If possible, send the manuscripts no later than December 20, in order that they may be judged during Christmas vacation. January 10 is the final deadline; no piece received after that date can be considered.

3. Typed copy is preferred, but not absolutely essential. Send manuscripts first class. No manuscripts will be returned unless you enclose an addressed envelope of sufficient size and with first class postage affixed.

4. Each teacher is requested to send no more than five pieces of prose or ten poems.

5. It is possible to send a school publication if you wish. If you do so, please mark the selections you want considered. If both poetry and prose are included in the same publication, it will be necessary to send one copy to Professor Seybold and one to Professor Waffle.

6. Do not hesitate to send writing by your seventh, eighth, and ninth graders. The student's year in school will be considered by the judges so that seventh graders, for instance, will not be competing with twelfth graders.

7. Any writing done during the second semester of the 1958-59 school year or during this year until the deadline for submission of manuscripts, is admissible.

8. At the *end* of each selection, include the necessary information in exactly this form:

William Dodge, twelfth grade, Clinton High School
Marie Long, teacher

9. Make a careful check of the punctuation of the poetry as well as of the prose. Many poems in the past have been disqualified because of inadequate punctuation.

10. Before submitting manuscripts, check with each student to be sure the work is original. Failure to submit original work can cause embarrassment to the writer, to the teacher, and to the *Bulletin*. Enclose with the writing a statement to this effect: To the best of my knowledge the enclosed manuscripts were written by the students whose names they bear.

